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THE HOUSE AND ITS PLENISHING

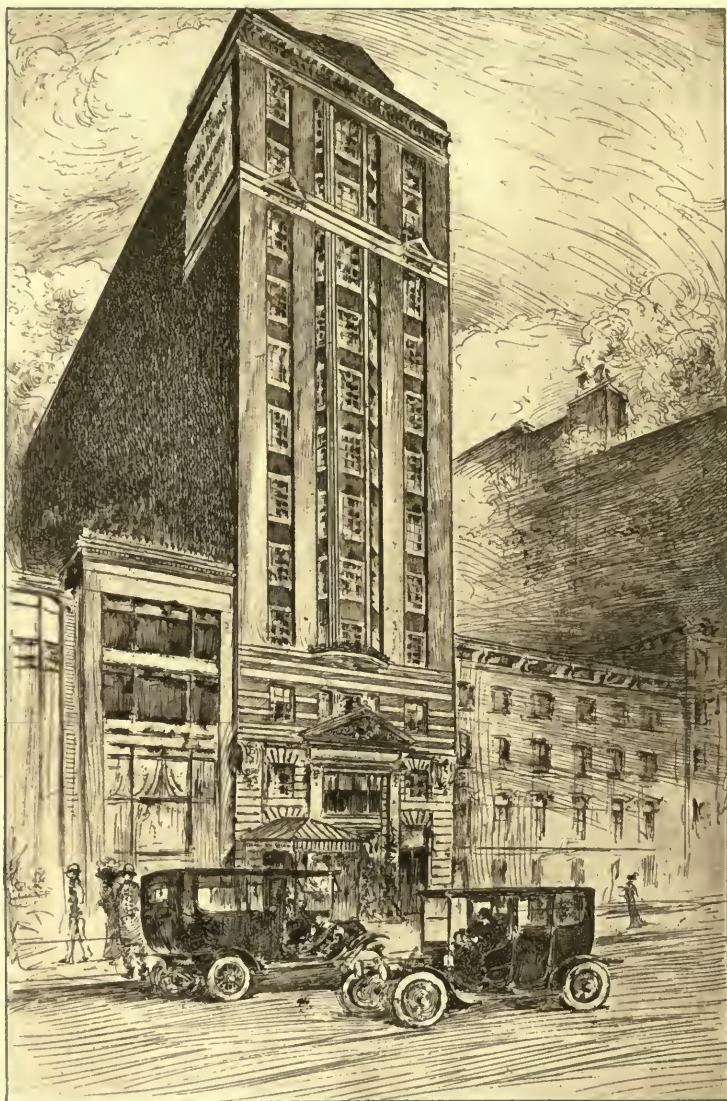
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THE HOUSE AND
ITS PLENISHING



CHELTENHAM, N.Y.

The Grand Rapids Furniture Company
Incorporated
34 & 36 West Thirty-second Street
New York 1910

The House and its **Plenishing** /

Being a brief endeavor
clearly to set forth the
principles which should underlie
any well-considered scheme
for the proper furnishing
of the House



New York

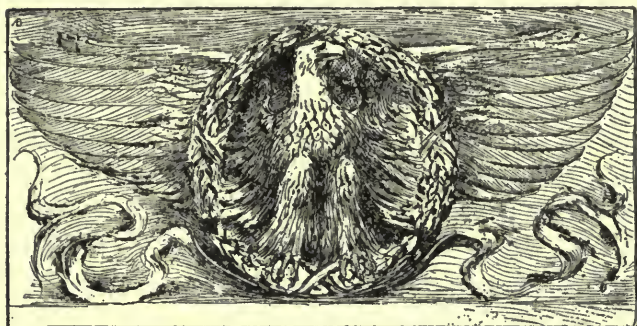
The Grand Rapids
Furniture Company
INCORPORATED

34 and 36 West Thirty-Second Street

Between Fifth Avenue and Broadway

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By Way of Introduction



HEN we come to analyze the alluring charm inherent in the oak-panelled and coffer-ceilinged room of some historic old English Manor house, we feel that it is not entirely due to the picturesqueness of the architectural surroundings.

Rather is it to be found in the time-worn furniture round which the family associations of generations seem to cling.

Here, we feel, are household goods entitled to

that worship whose ritual is the tender familiarity of life-long appreciation. So strong is the feeling of personality that attaches to each one of these friendly belongings, that almost can we see the former owners, in starched Elizabethan ruff or trim knee-breeches of Georgian days, as the case may be, sitting in this high-backed chair or reaching for some cherished piece of china to the shelf of that diamond-latticed cabinet.

Nor is the reason far to seek ; this was furniture chosen not at random or in obedience to the dictates of an ephemeral fashion, but after mature thought and deliberation, to serve some definite and well-considered purpose.

And so to-day if the house we live in is to be a home and not a mere dwelling-place, it must be furnished with a discriminating care that is the offspring of real affection for the things we know as furniture.

It calls for somewhat more than even the most expert intelligence. It demands a degree of interest that approaches the enthusiastic.

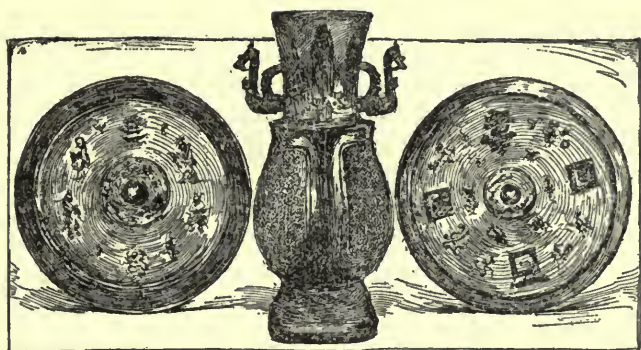
To the increasing number of those who share these views the following pages will, it is hoped, prove of service.

THE LIVING-ROOM



CHEL TENHAM, N.Y.

*"That mingling of courtliness and
Simplicity"*



The Living-Room or Drawing-Room

WHEN the revelling in the Banqueting-Hall of mediæval England reached its boisterous height, the Lady with her maidens would discreetly withdraw to her Bedchamber. In time a portion of this room was screened off for her reception, and later a separate room was provided. So by degrees the "Withdrawing-Room" became a permanent feature of the English houses and took the place of the French "Salon de Compagnie" or state apartment.

We have retained the name in its shortened form, but the province of the modern Drawing-

Room has been so enlarged that it must be regarded not simply as the Lady's Withdrawing-Room, and still less as a mere gala, or state, apartment. While partaking to an extent of both these characteristics, the Drawing-Room in houses of an average size may be looked upon as a Living-Room or meeting-place for the whole family, when the pleasures and pursuits, the business occupations and cares of the day are over.

These varied functions demand a singular care and discretion in its furnishing.

Neither must formality and display be carried to the point of chilly discomfort, nor must a desirable coziness be attained at the expense of a certain stateliness of appearance.

The ornate elaboration, for instance, of the period of Louis XV—with its carved gilt and tapestried Bergères by Gouthière or Riesener, its Commodes with their mountings of ciselé Bronze by the Caffieri, or its Encoigneurs elaborately inlaid by Boule—will not serve our purpose. While appropriate enough for the comparatively rare occasions of an entirely formal hospitality, such a scheme would seem garish and out of place under the normal conditions of modern family life.

On the other hand, the somewhat sober gravity and sedateness which distinguish much of the

Mahogany of the earlier Chippendale period befit as little a room which must serve, not seldom, under an artificial illumination, as a setting for the variegated toilettes of an evening assemblage.

There is, however, in the furniture of the English School a midway ground, which offers that mingling of courtliness and simplicity for which the room seems to call.

In the works of Sheraton and Heppelwhite, of Thomas Shearer and Robert Manwaring, and of other craftsmen of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, one may find the ideal furnishings for the Drawing-Room or Living-Room, whatever may be its proportions and whether its surroundings be of the Country or of the Town.

In these shield-backed Chairs, slender-appearing but constructionally strong; in these taper-legged Card and Occasional Tables; in these finely proportioned Cabinets, through whose latticed doors may be caught the harmonious coloring of old china and the radiance of antique glass; in these Window-seats with their gracefully attenuated supports; in these folding Screens with their suggestions of the coqueties of an earlier age—in each and every one we find the same note of old-world refinement. Their convincing elegance of form and suavity of line are reminiscent of that

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neo-classic revival which, following the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, so strongly influenced the minor arts of England and of France.

Add to this the effect of buoyant animation imparted by the delicate lines of inlay which brighten the shadowy richness of the Mahogany and by the painted bands of floral or conventional decoration which harmonize so aptly with the golden surfaces of the Satinwood, and their tale is told of charm and delightsomeness.

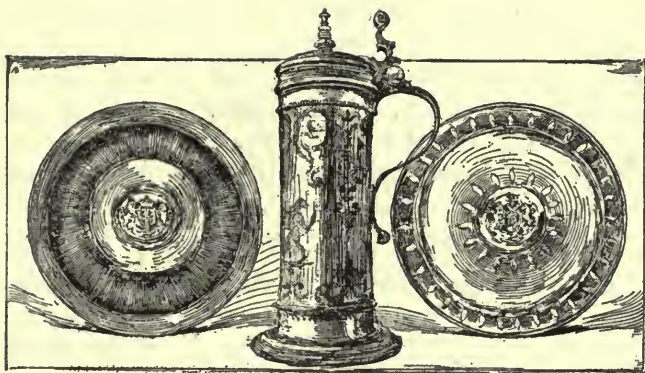
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THE DINING-ROOM



CHELTHAM, N.Y.

"Some little stateliness and display"



The Dining-Room

NEITHER gloomy nor frivolous, but of a dignified cheeriness, the Dining-Room should be instinct with the spirit of hospitality, and accord its welcome, not only to the stranger-guest, but to the members of the household and their intimates as well. To this the furniture must contribute, at least as much as the interior decorations and architectural treatment, and in order to arrive at the Style and Period which lend themselves most fittingly to the desired purpose the bygone associations of the room itself may well receive some consideration.

As we know it—as a room set apart for the purposes of the table—it was, in all but English

houses, practically unknown until the close of the eighteenth century. In France as in Italy it was the practice for the family to dine in any one of the Dining-Rooms temporarily available and convenient.

But in England the case was very different. As early as the seventeenth century the "Dining-Parlor," as it was termed, was a very marked feature in English house-planning. Oftentimes, indeed, there were several of these, so arranged that they could be advantageously used in turn and in accordance with the varying seasons of the year.

Not until the middle of the succeeding century, however, did the Dining-Room assume its place of present importance, for not until then did the formal dinner become the conventional manifestation of hospitality.

Of the resulting predilection for some little stateliness and display in the furnishing of this room with its increasing significance, the English furniture-makers were not slow to avail themselves.

Thomas Chippendale, for instance, devotes no little of his "Gentleman's and Cabinet-Maker's Director" to "Chairs, Side-Tables, Wine-Coolers, Knife-boxes, and other pieces suitable for Dining-Room adornment."

The thought and consideration bestowed by him on his Dining-Room chairs resulted in the production of a type preëminently fitted for table use—the seats wide and deep so that the oftentimes tediously protracted sitting might be endured, the backs not too high to interfere with the convenient service of the table.

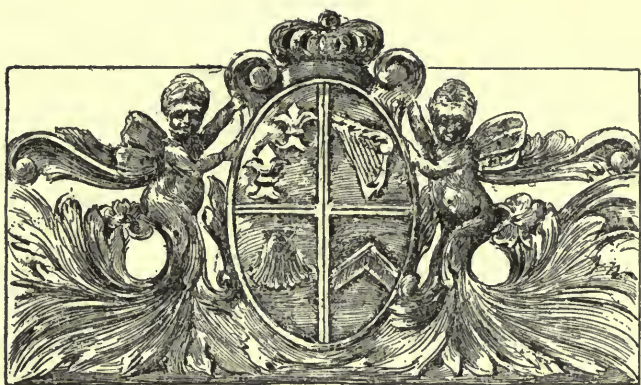
It follows then that the choice of appropriate furniture for the Dining-Room may well be determined in favor of the later Chippendale period, with only one exception. Chippendale never made a Sideboard, and therefore, for this characteristic fitment of the modern Dining-Room, the assistance of Chippendale's contemporaries and successors, Shearer or Sheraton, must be invoked.

THE LIBRARY



CHEL TENHAM, N. Y.

"A certain catholicity of treatment"



The Library

AS a natural consequence of the part it so often plays, of the general Living-Room of the masculine side of the household, it seems fitting that the dominant note of the Library's furnishing should be one of virility, vigor, and sobriety.

Not until long after the invention of printing, and the consequent reduplication of books, was the Library, as we know it, to differentiate itself from the Scriptorium of monkish days. But before the mid-seventeenth century mark had been crossed, the Library in many an English country mansion had come to be a room of considerable consequence.

And so, to-day, when we evoke a memory-picture of the typical book-worm, though he himself may be habited in the sober black small-clothes of the eighteenth century, we see him seated in a high-backed Stuart chair of carved walnut, and resting his black-letter folio on a sturdy oaken table of Queen Elizabeth's days.

There are sentimental reasons, then, for relying, as regards at least one of the main features of the Library's furnishing, on reproductions — the most faithful procurable — of English Oak and Walnut furniture of the seventeenth century.

Yet, though the craftsmen of the first three quarters of that century produced work that has rarely been excelled for its harmonious proportion, refined detail and general nobility of design, the varied functions of the modern library demand a certain catholicity of treatment.

Not out of place, therefore, is the more massive mahogany of the English Georgian or our own Colonial era. So important a plenishment, for instance, as the writing-table might well borrow its proportions and its severity of style as well as its common-sensible capacity and convenience from the century which elevated familiar correspondence into the sphere of literary art.

THE BEDROOMS



CHEL TENHAM, N.Y.

"Faintly delicate in its details"



The Bedrooms

THE ideal Bedroom demands not only a nice sense of selection, but a faculty for composition which shall arrange into a restfully pleasing picture its various plenishings.

Although encompassed with historical traditions which reach farther back than those of any other, in its present manifestation, it is, of all the house rooms, the most essentially modern. For this reason, perhaps, in the search for appropriate styles in its furnishings, we instinctively approach, as nearly as may be, to our own time and era.

The mediæval or Renaissance Bedroom with its heavily draped and canopied State Bed, with

its tapestried hangings and with the carved and painted coffer which were its chief furnishing, may be left almost completely out of our present reckoning. Not until the close of the eighteenth century do we find, in our own country as well as in England and France, Bedrooms which, conforming in a certain degree to our modern principles of hygiene, may offer us some suggestions derived from their furnishing, of which advantage may be opportunely taken.

The associative, as well as the active, atmosphere of the Bedroom should be a commingling of fresh air and sunlight, and its ideal outlook therefore is a garden. Even in the city, however, the desired sentiment may be suggested by the deftness of arrangement, and the sagacious selection of its furnishings.

There is more than one Bedroom still to be seen in some Colonial Manor-House of Virginia or the Carolinas which, with its Mahogany tall-boys, its tent bedstead, and its bow-fronted chest of drawers, might well, even for a closely hemmed-in city house, be reproduced with an almost textual accuracy.

There is, however, one Bedroom in the house which calls for something approaching *finesse* in its treatment. The custom, in France of the late

eighteenth century, based on the growing fondness for *petits appartements*, of dividing the Chamber into a suite of two or more small rooms including a Boudoir, as well as a Bedroom, cannot always with convenience be followed in this country.

Nevertheless the Bedroom of the mistress of the household must often, of necessity, partake of the characteristics of boudoir as well as of sleeping-chamber.

For it then, nothing could be more applicably appropriate than the choice of that French neo-classicism, reticent in its lines and daintily delicate in its details, with which is associated the name of Louis Seize, though it is rather, perhaps, to Marie Antoinette that the credit of this appealing style should be given. The touch of feminine grace which pervades it, the very purposes which led to the creation of some of its more characteristic forms, such as the *Lit de Repos*, or the *Table de Toilette*, suggest that the Queen rather than the King should have been its sponsor. In any case, however, there is, about the best examples of the style, the courtly grace, as well as the studied simplicity, that are demanded by a room which must at times serve for the informal reception of feminine visitors.

In Conclusion

IN the foregoing suggestions as to the principles which should underlie the furnishing of the modern house, an endeavor has been made to so broaden them as to admit of their widest and most general application.

So, while only the four main rooms have been considered in detail, the remaining rooms of the house may be treated on precisely similar lines.

It needs only to determine the precise purposes for which the room, whether Hall or Lounging-Room, Nursery or Music-Room, is destined, and the general character of the furniture most appropriate to those purposes will surely suggest itself.

The satisfactory selection of the style which seems to embody those characteristics will surely follow, "as the night the day."

It remains only to point out the helpful part which the Grand Rapids Furniture Company is prepared to play in regard to this.

It has always been a source of satisfaction to the Company that it is enabled to offer a wider and more diversified opportunity for the selection of

THE GRAND RAPIDS FURNITURE COMPANY

THE HOUSE AND ITS PLENISHING

carefully considered furniture than can elsewhere be found.

No matter what the architectural character of the surroundings, no matter what the general scheme of decoration may be, furniture of a style which will be appropriately harmonious is always to be found among the Company's productions.

Further than this, it matters not what may be desired—whether some trifle of relative insignificance or some piece of the utmost importance—it will be found in either case to be distinguished by the same integrity of material, the same carefulness of construction, and the same whole-hearted attention to the nicety of its finish and its details.

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